

Launch of Islam Awareness Week 2007

Bismillahi Rahamanir Rahim

(In the name of God, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful)

Hon Minister Chris Carter

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalaam Alaikum Wa' Rahmatullahi Wa'Barakatoh

(Peace and Blessings Be Upon You).

Good Evening

This year, we are marking the Islam Awareness Week with the theme "Unity in Diversity".

The world has never been the same after 9/11 and events following that. However, the world today is increasingly interconnected. As a result of this interconnection, people of different culture and religious beliefs have converged together. Diversity has made our global societies culturally rich. Yet, it also has presented us with challenges that must be taken seriously so that we are able to create social harmony and peaceful co-existence.

New Zealand is a multi-racial and multi-religious society. Being critically aware of the crippling effect of communal tensions around the world, New Zealand has placed utmost importance on promoting and maintaining racial and religious harmony.

New Zealand has laid some strong foundations for religious and social harmony. The provision of equality of opportunity for all New Zealanders to progress has provided the broader context for the growth of social cohesion despite racial and religious diversity. New Zealand's continued emphasis on tolerance and respect for different cultures and religious beliefs allows for the expression of difference without impinging on our laws and social norms.

The New Zealand Muslim community has built up our way of life founded on Islamic beliefs and principles, and the New Zealand system has provided opportunities for all. We have worked diligently over the years to contribute to New Zealand's success. We have striven to preserve our values and, at the same time, made practical adjustments amidst changing social circumstances. Our approach, which is true to our religion and yet pragmatic in its outlook, has enabled us to live as good Muslims in a multi-racial and multi-religious society, and contribute to New Zealand's economic and social development over the years.

We are ethnically diverse – our faith places great emphasis on equality between different ethnic groups, which is reflected in the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah, Saudi Arabia. Our imperative in New Zealand is to value this diversity as well as ensuring that ethnic differences do not undermine our unity as Muslims and New Zealanders.

We must reach out to fellow New Zealanders – initiatives like Islam Awareness Week highlight the work that needs to be done to increase the awareness of both Muslims and wider New Zealanders, of our respective beliefs and values. I believe we will find we have more in common than we thought. This will lead to a society in which all New Zealanders are understanding, respectful and global achievers.

All the faiths that are professed and practiced today have one theme in common. That is to work for peace and tranquillity in our thoughts and action as the basic condition for leading our lives as meaningful and acceptable to Allah Almighty. Making humanity realise the basic truth was the message and the mission of all our Prophets and seers of all ages.

With those words, I would like to extend a warm invitation to all of you to the various Islam Awareness Week activities happening around the country. I would also invite your organisations to contribute your own Islam Awareness projects – over the following years in celebrating the Islam Awareness Week together.

God Bless You All. Wasalaam.

Thank you.

JAVED KHAN
PRESIDENT